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Senate

The Senate met at 2 p.m. and was called to order by the President pro tempore (Mr. STEVENS).

PRAYER

The Chaplain, Dr. Barry C. Black, offered the following prayer:

Let us pray.

O God, You reveal Yourself in the glory of the heavens and in the whisper of conscience. Make us aware of Your presence as this day unfolds. Grant that this knowledge of Your involvement in our day will influence our thoughts, words, and deeds. Help us to focus on serving and pleasing You, as You lift us above suspicions and fears. Sustain our lawmakers in their important work. Remind them that to do something well usually requires the patience to not hurry the process. Remove perplexities and give them Your peace. Open their minds to the counsels of Your eternal wisdom. Increase in us all a hunger and thirst for righteousness.

We pray in Your Holy Name. Amen.

PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE

The President pro tempore led the Pledge of Allegiance, as follows:

I pledge allegiance to the Flag of the United States of America, and to the Republic for which it stands, one nation under God, indivisible, with liberty and justice for all.

RESERVATION OF LEADER TIME

The PRESIDENT pro tempore. Under the previous order, the leadership time is reserved.

MORNING BUSINESS

The PRESIDENT pro tempore. Under the previous order, there will be a period for the transaction of morning business.

RECOGNITION OF THE MAJORITY LEADER

The PRESIDENT pro tempore. The majority leader is recognized.

SCHEDULE

Mr. FRIST. Mr. President, today we are returning to session in order to conclude our work for the first session of the 109th Congress. I want to welcome everybody back after a couple of weeks where people have been with constituents and people have been working very hard to bring to conclusion many of the issues that were left unfinished a couple of weeks ago. Real progress has been made over the course of the last 2 weeks. Over the course of this past weekend, a lot of work has been done. As I mentioned prior to Thanksgiving, we will be working today and tomorrow on a number of issues. However, the first rollcall vote will be on Wednesday morning.

Many of our colleagues have asked about the schedule for this week, this weekend, as well as next week. As things unfold and as my discussions with the Democratic leader continue, we will be forthcoming to let people know exactly what we expect. We would like to finish up our work as quickly as possible prior to the Christmas holiday. However, everyone does need to be prepared to stay as long as necessary to finish the work that is before us.

Today, we expect to reach an agreement on several motions to instruct the conferees on the deficit reduction bill that is at the desk. We would have those motions debated tomorrow, on Tuesday, and on Wednesday, with votes to occur or begin to occur Wednesday morning.

We also expect to debate the Bahrain Free Trade Agreement during tomorrow's session under a short time agreement.

The PATRIOT Act conference report will arrive in the Senate sometime this

week, and we will proceed to that conference report when it is available.

Chairman WARNER has completed work on the Defense authorization conference report, and that may also be around here midweek.

We also need to complete the appropriations process by taking up and taking action on the final 2 conference reports. This week we need to act on the Labor-HHS appropriations as well as the Defense Appropriations Committee reports.

I mentioned reconciliation. A lot of work has been done over the course of the last several weeks among the various committees. I want to continue to encourage all chairmen to aggressively work with their House counterparts on this important reconciliation bill. Clearly, a lot of work remains, but with the cooperation and patience of all Members, I believe we can get our work done and adjourn in a timely way. It is going to be up to each and every one of us to decide when we will be able to finish our business and adjourn this session. Senators will need to keep their schedules flexible over the course of this week and I believe we can finish everything this week. If not, we would have to continue into next week—or this week and this weekend, and if not, we would have to continue into the early part of next week, but we should be able to complete everything this week. Again, everybody, please keep your schedules flexible.

I do want to thank all Senators in advance for their help as we schedule these final days.

I yield the floor.

FILIBUSTERING

Mr. BYRD. Mr. President, will the distinguished majority leader yield?

Mr. FRIST. I am happy to.

Mr. BYRD. I want to congratulate the majority leader on helping to get these appropriations bills all passed. We discussed this, he and I, several

• This "bullet" symbol identifies statements or insertions which are not spoken by a Member of the Senate on the floor.



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